

DESCRIPTION**METHOD AND EQUIPMENT TO CHANGE THE KNITTING DENSITY IN THE PRODUCTION OF WARP FABRICS AND TUBULAR ARTICLES BY RASCHEL LOOMS AND OBTAINED PRODUCTS.**

5 So-called Raschel looms having two basically vertical and parallel needle beds are used as a rule for a wide range of warp knitted fabrics.

Said looms are sometimes used also for manufacturing tubular hosiery and knitwear items with a manufacturing 10 process partly corresponding to the one of traditional linear two-bed flat knitting machines.

Tubular items thus manufactured do not fully meet the requirements of current textile production, which 15 privileges anatomically shaped tubular or seamless manufactured items, more comfortable and elegant.

This is due to the fact that in the aforesaid Raschel looms knitting density is varied empirically by changing both the tension of yarns fed to the needles and the pulling strength of items during the manufacturing 20 stage.

This method, which is both imperfect and limited, simply exploits the intrinsic elasticity of the various yarns together with the general elasticity of the fabric during the manufacturing stage.

In practice, the aforesaid looms are not provided with

- 2 -

a reliable mechanical-textile device for controlling and adjusting in a continuous and precise way the knitting density during the knitting stage. The negative consequences of such limitation affect tubular items thus manufactured, which are objectively imperfect as far as their anatomic shape is concerned and hardly reproducible and modifiable as far as size is concerned. In an example from the prior art, a Raschel loom, referred to with TR in Fig. 1, is provided with a front needle bed FNA and a rear needle bed FNP, which are parallel and basically vertical and house needles N-N1 moving alternately for taking up the yarns from oscillating yarn feeders GF so as to produce, together with the sinking plane PAB, common warp knitted "double-bed" fabrics or said tubular items. During the manufacturing cycle needle N, housed slidingly in fixed bed FN, sinks from its maximum height in Fig. 2 to the lower or stroke-end position FC in Fig. 3, i.e. under the sinking plane PAB. During the stroke of needle N needle bed FN does not move. In other words, needles N-N1 in Fig. 1 follow a fixed and forced forward and backward (or up and down) way within two extreme definite positions in order to take up the yarn for obtaining the stitch on sinking plane

- 3 -

PAB, i.e. on top of needle beds FN, usually fastened to the supporting frame of loom TR (not shown). Though seldom used, the production of tubular items with the aforesaid Raschel loom has some technical-textile problems due to the fact that the number of operating needles cannot be changed, whereas knitting density can be varied only to a small and imprecise extent. For instance, when manufacturing very fine tights with jersey or stocking fabric, which therefore have an evident covering effect, the different nature of the anatomic parts involved therein should be taken into consideration, such as hips, glutei, thighs and ankles. Concerning this, it can be easily understood that in order to obtain a duly shaped manufactured item, different knitting densities depending on the anatomic parts involved therein are necessary, considering that ankle size is about one third of thigh size.

Thus, only a continuous and suitable variation of knitting density ensures that the manufactured items regularly adheres to the anatomic parts involved therein, which is an unavoidable need for so-called "medical" or therapeutic stockings, characterized by a higher and gradual fabric compression on feet, ankles and calves. Now, the present invention aims at elimi-

nating or reducing lacks and limits as referred to above by proposing fabric, knitwear and hosiery items meeting more suitably the requirements of modern textile products with original economic, manufacturing, 5 functional, aesthetical and commercial purposes.

Therefore, an aim of the invention consists in providing a method and related equipment for manufacturing, with two needle beds "tricot-Raschel-crochet" looms for link knitting, tubular knitwear and hosiery items 10 among which dresses, sweaters and stockings, tights, bodices and the like having a differentiated elasticity and knitting density with a more accurate anatomic shape.

A further aim consists manufacturing traditional 15 single-needle or double-needle bed warp knitted fabrics further characterized by a higher flexibility and accuracy in the variation of existing knitting densities, which can also be very different, or for new three-dimensional effects, i.e. also in relief.

20 An additional aim consists in manufacturing fabrics and warp knitted items characterized by courses or stitches having a structure corresponding to the one known as "tuck stitch" in the field of weft knitting. Further aims will appear from the description, examples and accompanying drawings, per se or in combina- 25

tion with one another, beyond the final claims.

The characteristics of the invention and related advantages will be more evident from the following description of examples of embodiment shown in the accompanying figures, in which:

- Figures 1-2-3 show a partial view of prior art warp loom TR provided with parallel beds FNA-FNP with sinking plane PAB lying above with latch needles N-N1 operating alternately from high position for taking up yarns from yarn feeders GF to low or stroke-end position of Figs. 2-3;

- Figures 4, 5, 6 show different operating positions of the needle bed, which depending on the various circumstances takes positions FN1, FN2, FN3 to which correspond the operating heights of sinking planes PAB-1, PAB-2, PAB-3 lying above;

- Fig. 7 is a partial view of loom TR2 characterized by moving needle beds PNA-PNP whose vertical shift affects in this case directly and separately the length (and density) of stitches S-1, S-2 thus produced, due to corresponding variable sinking planes PAB-V;

- Fig. 8 shows the combination of needles N, housed slidingly in the moving needle bed FN onto which acts cam EX, which according to the different embodiments can rotate with continuous or alternate movement. In

-6-

Fig. 9 the aforesaid needle bed FN and corresponding needles N build a combination of reciprocally moving and sliding parts;

- Figures 9, 10, 11, 12 show a front and a plan view 5 of needle bed FN kept in position and sliding on the lateral ends by means of guides GL, which are in their turn fastened to the loom supporting frame, not shown;
- Fig. 13 shows a simple device for controlling directly the height of needle bed FN. It is a known combination of mechanical parts for lifting and lowering 10 directly needle bed FN depending on the desired knitting density;
- Fig. 14 shows a schematic front view of loom TR2, intentionally extended so as to see tights CM produced 15 continuously according to a repeatable minimum cycle: bodice-toe;
- in Fig. 15 the different tights CM are produced according to an inverted operating cycle; toe-toe. LT refers to cutting line.
- 20 The description refers to a "tricot-Raschel-crochet" loom for warp knitting, equipped with two needle beds, and needles preferably of automatic type, i.e. with self-moving latch.
- 25 By the way, also hooked needles or pressure needles, compound needles and the like are however included in

- 7 -

the teachings of the invention. From a general mechanical-textile point of view, the Raschel loom referred to is widely known to skilled technicians and does not require as such any specific description.

5 The invention can apply both to Raschel machines or looms (also known as "tricot" looms) having one or two parallel and vertical needle beds (i.e. whose needles slide vertically) and to Raschel machines or looms of "crochet" type, having one or two parallel and horizontal needle beds (i.e. whose needles slide horizontally).

Anyway, reference is made to patent US 2604768 and to mentioned patents.

Raschel loom designed to produce the manufactured items according to the invention differs from known looms also in that it is equipped with a mechanical precision instrument for automatically adjusting the knitting density corresponding to the combination of one or more beds of needles moving with respect to 20 needles housed therein during the knitting cycle, and of said needles.

The aforesaid needle beds according to the invention change or vary their position within sufficiently useful limits, preferably along the longitudinal axis 25 with respect to their needles. The specific case is

schematically shown in detail in Figures 4, 5, 6, where needle N, shown sectioned as completely lowered or at stroke end FC, always lies in the same position or at the same height.

5 The usual needle bed, already referred to with FN in Figures 2 and 3, varies in this case its position and takes the different positions referred to with FN1-FN2-FN3, or with arrows F. This vertical stroke also changes in a substantial way the distance between position 10 FC of needle N and sinking plane PAB lying above, which with respect to the fixed position of Fig. 3 takes now variable positions PAB-1, PAB-2, PAB-3 of Figures 4, 5, 6. The moving needle bed according to the present invention enables to change the vertical 15 position or height of the sinking plane lying above, which is also gradually moving, thus obtaining several advantages.

Fig. 7 shows a sectioned view of a detail of Raschel loom TR2, which differs at first sight from the usual loom TR of Figure 1 in that the moving beds housing the needles enable to vary the density of manufactured fabric depending on the position of said needles.

This results is a suitable anatomic shape of the aforesaid tubular items or new effects - which can 25 also be very contrasting - of the different knitting

densities in the same item or fabric (very narrow and very broad knitting), together with courses of undulating or three-dimensional knitted fabric due to exceeding knitted fabric of a fabric portion with respect to other fabric portions.

5 Sinking plane PAB, previously fixed, becomes a moving and variable plane referred to as PAB-V in Fig. 7, and therefore every needle bed FNA-FNP can take part, if necessary, in the production of stitches having different and variable densities such as S-1 and S-2.

10 Moreover, the additional combination of needle N4 and needle bed FN4 in Fig. 4A enables to change also the amount and type of knitting structure of the knitted fabric produced in every needle bed.

15 As a matter of fact, by further lowering needle bed FN4 in Fig. 4A, hook or jack H of needle N4, though keeping its stroke FC (or minimum descent) unchanged, lies anyway above sinking plane PAB-4, to a sufficient extent so as to prevent the latter from producing the 20 new stitch, i.e. from discharging the previous stitch.

Therefore, in the various useful and efficient positions above said plane PAB-4, the latch of said needle N4 can be either open, half-open or closed; anyway, the temporary absence of sinking plane PAB-4, which 25 lies too low with respect to lower stroke of needle

-10-

N4, prevents stitch discharge, thus interrupting the knitting process.

This technique has interesting prospects and advantages from a textile point of view, both because the 5 knitting process can be interrupted intentionally in every needle bed, and because the same yarn can be fed, if needed, at least two consecutive times to the same needle, which will produce a stitch using two 10 yarns, an important result for reinforced knitted areas.

Moreover, by suitably coordinating the pulling strength of manufactured knitted fabric and the interruption of the knitting process, new three-dimensional 15 knitting effects can be obtained together with transparent effects and a higher "non-run" degree of the manufactured item, the latter being a favorable feature also for technical fabrics. In general, traditional Raschel looms are particularly bulky and firm, often too large since they are on one side large-sized 20 and heavy, whereas on the other side they have to reduce or damp continuous vibrations due to sometimes impressive operating speeds.

From an economic point of view, the invention prefers 25 small-sized looms equipped with needle beds for producing single manufactured items or manufactured items

in pairs.

This option highly simplifies design, manufacturing, investment and managing costs for these looms.

Considering the specific nature of envisaged production, the loom referred to is quite "lighter" and relatively modified with respect to traditional looms, with obvious advantages as far as initial costs and managing costs are concerned.

As far as the technical aspect involving the moving nature of the needle bed referred to is concerned, i.e. its longitudinal stroke in this case, known means commonly used in the industrial field in similar circumstances are provided for to this purpose, considering the size of said needle beds.

In a simple and cheap embodiment of the invention, needle bed FN in Figs. 9 and 12 is kept in its operating position on its ends by suitable lateral guides GL in Figs. 10 and 11, appropriately fastened to the main frame of Raschel loom. Against the lower part of said needle bed FN acts at least a cam EX schematically shown in Fig. 8, whose continuous or intermittent rotation engages and lifts the needle bed lying above.

Descent occurs by gravity or by means of return springs.

In a different embodiment, said needle bed FN is func-

tionally and structurally connected to a simple mechanical lifting and lowering device, schematically shown in Fig. 13. made up of usual mechanical elements such as cam EX2 engaging horizontal lever L1, which 5 controls in its turn vertical lever L2 connected directly to needle bed FN lying above. More generally, for needle bed shifts known combinations are used, made up of cams, levers, connecting rods and cranks, traction springs, return springs, compression springs, 10 guides or rectified sliding planes, bearings, slots and guiding pins inserted therein.

Known mechanical parts and means in various pushing and/or traction combinations, usually connected to general machine drive, or equipped with their own 15 drive actuated by electric motors in general, brushless motors, stepless motors, linear motors, D.C. motors and the like connected to pushing, traction, torsion elements or means, with continuous, cyclical, controlled, gradual, micrometric, etc. movement, can 20 be used.

An indirect example is the longitudinal shift obtained automatically with the needle cylinder or bed and/or its stitch cams in hosiery machines for graduating the knitting density depending on the various anatomic 25 parts. Anyhow, it should be pointed out that the

-13-

stroke of the aforesaid needle bed, though depending on its gauge (needles per inch or equivalents), remains a fractional value below a few millimeters, unless intentionally extreme density effects or trans-
5 parent effects are desired, which are also possible according to the invention. The great flexibility of the invention enables to change also in a substantial way the shape and functions of at least a part of current production of fabrics, hosiery and warp knitted
10 items with results and effects as described, shown and claimed.

Though necessarily limited, the present invention points out to skilled technicians further innovations, falling anyhow within the framework of the invention.

15